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Statement submitted by Commission of the Churches on International Affairs of the World Council of Churches, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2010/100.

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Statement

The Commission of the Churches on International Affairs of the World Council of Churches welcomes the theme of the 2010 high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council and its annual ministerial review, implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women.

The Commission, a fellowship of 348 churches with over 560 million Christians in more than 110 countries, affirms that all persons, both male and female, are created in God's image. God's world was meant to be one of abundance with fundamental human rights and dignity for all; women, however, are disproportionately robbed of this abundance. We affirm the promotion of gender equality and justice from a theological and human rights perspective.

We maintain that the contributions and empowerment of women and girls of all ages are fundamental, enshrined in the Beijing Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and international laws, and necessary for meeting all the Millennium Development Goals.

Despite national policies and international agreement to advance women's rights, existing national, international and United Nations resources and mechanisms are inadequate to eradicate and address the deprivation of human dignity faced by women. Many efforts have failed to recognize the full diversity of women's situations and conditions and the particular ways different women are disadvantaged.

The recent fifty-fourth session of the Commission of the Status of Women on the fifteenth anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action was a missed opportunity for Member States to make concrete commitments with timelines to achieve each of the Platform goals.

Three critical areas urgently need greater resources and actions by Member States that challenge and transform systemic barriers, if women's empowerment and gender equality is to be achieved: (i) ending the culture and practice of impunity as it relates to violence against women; (ii) enacting gender-based reform in leadership, power and decision-making processes; (iii) establishing economic justice, as many women have been disproportionally affected by the global economic and financial crisis.

The Commission calls upon Member States and the United Nations to:

- Fulfil the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women by committing to and providing resources for an accountability framework for the Beijing Platform for Action that includes concrete benchmarks, timelines, monitoring, evaluations and adequate resources and by integrating the Platform, the Convention and gender analysis into all the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council and all future global negotiations.
- End the culture and practice of impunity for violence against women by: (i) ending cultural practices and closing legal loopholes that grant perpetrators of violence, including States, impunity. The key to achieving this would be to

(a) train and reform police, military, legal and judicial sectors, which are often complicit in impunity; (b) include women in the training of the aforementioned sectors; and (c) enact and support sustainable programmes for men and boys to take responsibility for ending impunity and violence against women through positive training, gender awareness and human rights education; (ii) conducting national and international assessments of the culture and practice of impunity for violence against women.